

Roche Rock

It's a special place!

Special because of its geology

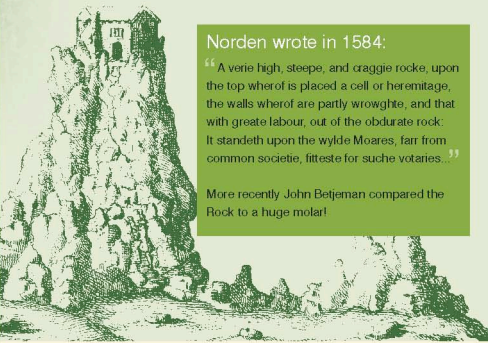
"The wild grandeur of the celebrated Roche Rocks has often attracted the attention of geologists". That was written in 1872, but why is the Rock still attracting the attention of geological researchers today? It's easy enough to describe what the Rock is made of. **It's not made of granite!** Unlike granite (which forms the base of this panel, and the high ground to the south) the rock here is made of just two minerals: grey quartz and black tourmaline. Both are very tough which is why the Rock sticks up.



Roche Rock is a time capsule of a geological event long, long ago. Its very special geology means it's designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Sometime in the future geologists will agree not only what the rock is but how it was formed. Maybe.

Geology in depth

Around 270 million years ago the granite that underlies this part of Cornwall was molten. Some geologists think that as it cooled and crystallised a pocket of watery liquid separated out, just like oil and water do not mix. This liquid contained all sorts of chemicals, including boron, and this finally crystallised as a quartz-tourmaline rock - just what we see here. But other geologists think that the rock crystallised as granite, but then a fluid very rich in boron went through the granite, driving out some chemicals and leaving a quartz-tourmaline rock - again, just what we see here!

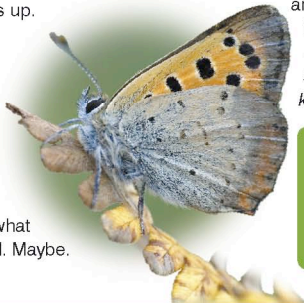


Norden wrote in 1584:
"A verie high, steepe, and craggie rocke, upon the top wherof is placed a cell or heremitage, the walls wherof are partly wroughte, and that with greate labour, out of the obdurate rock: It standeth upon the wyldre Moares, farr from common societie, fittest for suche votaries."
 More recently John Betjeman compared the Rock to a huge molar!

Special because of its wildlife

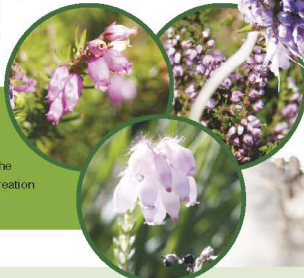


Around the Rock is one of the last bits of heathland in the area. Probably it looks much as it did a thousand or more years ago, after people had cut down the trees and scrub to make areas for their animals to graze. Later the fields around were cleared of stones and tilled. So...**this heathland is a time capsule of farming long ago.** Look and you will see an amazing variety of wildlife, far more than on the fields around. More flowers, more insects, more everything! In spring you'll see wood anemones, followed by bluebells, remnants of the woodland origins of the area, and then different flowering grasses and heathers. And all year round you can find gorse - furze locally - flowering. There's an old saying: *When gorse is not in flower, then kissing's not in fashion!*



Putting back the wild heart of Cornwall.

Soon there will be much more wildlife-rich heathland to enjoy. The grey Cornish Alps glow purple when the newly sown heathers come into flower. Oberenn Rosvro Kernow, the Cornwall Heathland Project, was the largest landscape re-creation initiative in Europe.

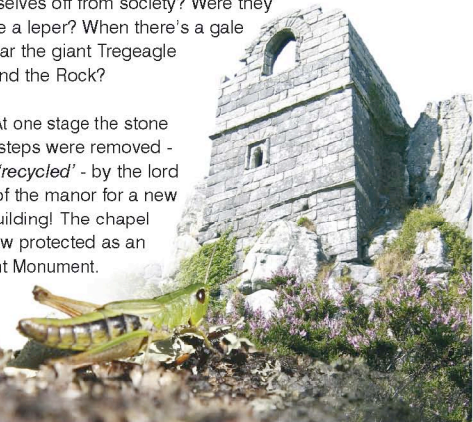


Special because of its history



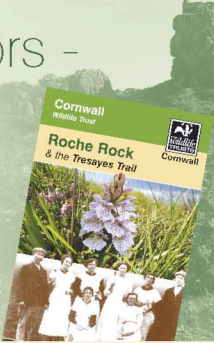
The ruin perched on the Rock is a chapel, dedicated to St Michael in 1409. It has two storeys - the chapel above and a room below. **The chapel is a time capsule from 1409.** But it's been a ruin for at least 250 years. That much we know. Beyond those facts it's all myth and legend. Did someone - a man or a woman - cut them themselves off from society? Were they sick, maybe a leper? When there's a gale can you hear the giant Tregagle howling round the Rock?

At one stage the stone steps were removed - 'recycled' - by the lord of the manor for a new building! The chapel is now protected as an Ancient Monument.



Special to local people - and to visitors - for hundreds of years!

Local people come here to walk. Visitors have been coming here for at least 400 years. **In the past local people used to act as guides, making money from the tourists!** Nowadays you can pick up a free leaflet in the village and follow a trail across the fields to Tresayes less than a mile away. There are lots more paths to explore. And if you want to find out about the unique china clay landscape why not visit the China Clay Country Park? **What sort of time capsule will we leave?** Roche Rock was sticking up long before humans came here - and it will be here long after we're gone!



Please keep the site special by not damaging the rock exposures, historic ruins or vegetation, and by following the Countryside Code. No climbing is permitted on the Rock. Access to the Rock is at the public's own risk.

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